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Are Millennials a good target in the non traditional hair colour segment? Comparing Gen X and Y

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Abstract

This research examines if there are significant differences on the motivation to interact with brands through social media between Generation X and Millennials (also called Generation Y). Furthermore, this study intends to examine if there is a relevant difference in their preference for non-traditional hair colour among these two generational cohorts. Results indicated that Generation Y members consider their relationship with brands as more equal than Generation X. They believe they have the capacity to help a brand succeed or fail especially with their engagement online. Moreover, they are more likely to be active on the Web, and they consider their offline and online worlds as intertwined. Finally, Gen Y is more motivated to consider using non-traditional hair colour than the older cohort. This study fills the gap in the literature by addressing how marketing professionals of the beauty market should market non-traditional hair colour, especially online, based on customers' generational cohort.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour; Non-traditional Hair colour; Brand Engagement; Generational Cohort

Acknowledgements

This project has certainly been the most enthusiastic one I have ever developed in regards to my academic life. I work full-time in Italy in a multinational company in the beauty sector, but it has definitely been worth it.

Furthermore, being able to study what I was learning every day at work has been a huge challenge for me. In addition, during my master's studies, consumer behaviour represented my favourite course, and that's why I found it particularly interesting to work on this Direct Research.

As a matter of fact, if marketers want to reach the customer by adapting and improving their marketing campaigns and strategies, I believe this area to be the best way to do it.

I would like to sincerely thank my thesis supervisor and advisor Professor Luís F. Martinez, Professor at NOVA, and my supervisor during my internship for all the support, it was a great pleasure working with him.

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1. Introduction

Generation X was directly followed by a new demographic cohort: Generation Y, also known as the Net or NEXT generation or Milliennials (Howe & Strauss, 2009). These terms refer to the generation born between 1980 and 2000, who are currently aged 16 to 36. Worldwide, the 2 billion Millenials represent roughly a quarter of the world's population, and they are shaping not only the Internet landscape, but the global economy as well (Fromm & Garton, 2013). As they come of age into their prime spending years, Millenials are exerting their power and influence like no generation before them. Their attitudes and values greatly differ from the generations before them. Values wise, they are visually driven, as their preferred method of expression is through photos on social networks, fearless, as 1/3 are tattooed and crafters of their own image, as they spend considerably more effort on creating their own unique looks (Lenhart *et al.,* 2010).

Behaviourally, Millennials differ from the generations before them as well (i.e. Generation X and Baby Boomers) (Smith & Mangold, 2012). As the first generation of digital natives, Millenials grew up with technology in an "always-on digital world", and heavily reliant on the Internet for practically everything (Lenhart *et al.,* 2010). The Internet and social media has become a central part of Millenials' lives, to the point where it has even become "indispensable". Sensing the opportunity, marketers have also been quick to shift their advertising budgets from traditional channels to digital and social channels, in order to connect with these consumers (Nelson & Suleman, 2011). On the other hand, Millenials are also more critical and sceptical of advertising messages, and are difficult to astonish or surprise.

The advent of Web 2.0 has also empowered Millenials (and other Internet users) with a louder voice in the online world. Their digital and social activity makes them potential creators of trends, customers, and sharers of new products. According to Moore (2008), Millenials are more likely to start trends, be engaged with pop culture, try new products and share them with friends and family. This generation is characterized by a "philosophy of participation" (Tuten & Solomon, 2012). The way they share information and socialize with people on social networks is different compared to other generations.

Hair and fashion are often used tools of self expression. They were used in movements in the 60s and 70s to break from the trends of previous generations and they are similarly being used now, specifically by women with hair colour (Almasi, 2016). Through dismissing mainstream beauty standards and choosing confidence, and individuality, non-traditional hair colour is another form of expression for primarily young women. It took a while for non-traditional hair colour to become a trend: we first saw it in fashion editorials and then on the runway. According to Berlinger (2016), like most trends, it was started by celebrities and even though at the beginning many women didn't feel very comfortable wearing it, it slowly became more mainstream.

Needless to say, marketers have also tried to build a relationship and engage with Millenials online (especially through social media) (Solomon & Tuten, 2012). The purpose of this is to generate greater brand awareness, to enhance brand equity & loyalty and raise brand affinity & authority; namely some of the most impressive psychological factors in a buying decision process

In summary, this paper has two main objectives. Firstly, to examine what motivates Millennials' media consumption, engagement and interaction with brands online. Then, this research examines if there is a relevant preference difference for non-traditional hair colour amongst the two generational cohorts. In order to accomplish the study's objectives, the research presents the following questions: Are the motivations that drive consumers to navigate online in order to interact with brands different from Gen X and Millennials? If so, are Millennials more willing to consider non-traditional hair colour than other generations?

Literature review

Even if consumer age is normally used as a segmentation variable in many studies, as typically used, it neither enables us to comprehend what really gives incentive to consumers, nor to identify the causes of their behaviour.

For that reason, the Cohort theory enlarges our understanding about the reason why a consumer's age is so decisive in them considering non-traditional hair colours. (Schewe *et al.,* 2002). Since every cohort takes into consideration people born in a certain period of time, they will most likely have similar experiences, values and priorities; qualities that will more or less remain unchanged throughout their lives. Actually, according to Ryder (1965), generational cohorts differ not only in age but also in their education, relationships with peers, and past experiences.

We can therefore follow Brosdahl and Carpenter's generational cohorts (2011) classification: Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1960), Generation X (born between 1961 and 1981) and Generation Y (born after 1981). Beyond their widely recognized affinity for technology, this research identified specific behaviours and attitudes that the Millennials are likely to bring with them into their next life stages.

Each of these characteristics and attitudes has implications for companies, their brands, and the leaders, who will need to adapt to an era of co-creation and two-way communication in which the new consumer clearly has a strong voice. In fact, according to Fromm & Garton (2013), consumers are not willing to be passive consumers any longer, this generation wants to actively participate, co-create and be included as partners in the brands they love.

An important difference between Millenials and other generational groups is their desire to participate: they want to take part in the decision-making process, be considered by their favourite brands to the point of being their helpers and even partners (Horton, Kaufman, 2015). In fact, many question what could be a brand's benefit in engaging their fans in such a close way, but it seems that Millennials commonly have an earnest interest in the brand's success. That's why, according to Fromm & Garton (2013), it's possible to call this the Participation Economy. Because of this cooperation, customers expect their opinion to be sought and considered. Being invited in these once exclusive processes makes them not only willing to participate but it makes them also demand it. Nevertheless, one limitation of Fromm & Garton's study was that the sample consisted mainly of Millennials, which generates the question if motivations change when comparing two generational cohorts.

Accordingly, this leads us to the formulation of a first hypothesis:

H1: Millennials are more likely to being considered as engaged and build a relationship online with a brand than Generation X.

A second point of view is that Millennials seek out brands in social media and value them as a social presence and they believe to have the capacity to help a brand succeed or fail (Mangold & Smith, 2012). Therefore, social media have become the most preferred tool to investigate and seek information about a product or a brand.

As a consequence, Gen Y, as opposed to Gen X, is expected to have a higher tendency to search for material online and to seek information through social media, as past literature confirms (Hsiu-Fen, 2007). This is because, for instance, young consumers (Gen Y) can instantly find what they are looking for by just turning to their electronic devices in social media; in the same way, they generally also want to instantly get what they want (promotions and better deals).

Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H2: Investigation motivation while interacting with brands through social media is higher in Generation Y than in Generation X.

As mentioned above, one distinctive characteristic of Millenials is their individuality. Instead of blending in, Millenials seek to stand out from the crowd (Young & Hinesly*, 2012)*.

This is also evident in their fashion choices – Millenials view their look as a way to tell their story, and spend more than any other generational cohorts on clothing (Nelson & Suleman, 2011). Their beauty choices also reflect their personality and online behaviours. Since many Millenials are actively posting photos ("selfies") of themselves on their social networks, they favour beauty products that offer immediate and dramatic results. These include contouring make-up, make-up with distinctive colour and non-traditional hair colour (Hsiu-Fen, 2007). Although non-traditional hair colour is still viewed as outlandish by the mainstream society, more Millenials are emboldened by their inner need for self-expression to buck the norm, and opting for non-traditional hair colour (Almasi, 2016).

This is a growing trend, as evident from online website and social media analytics – on YouTube, there have been over 2 billion views on videos related to non-traditional hair colour. In fact, numerous Hair Care vloggers use video to demonstrate the easy applications or the different styling/look. We can name Artistry Undercut Designs, in which other than hair dye there are undercut designs and surprise elements of elaborate design, glitter, jewels and pops of colour. Moreover, there is also a growing interest for multi-coloured hair: "Unicorn Hair" is a colourful blend of pastel purple, pink and blue hues. Another trend is called "galaxy hair" which uses deep blues and purples and sometimes glitter for stars. Another example of emerging hair trends on YouTube is represented by the success of the Harley Quinn movie. The protagonist has coloured her hair with different colours, and she earned the #1 female Halloween costume query in 2016.

Consequently, the following hypotheses are developed:

H3a: Millennials are more likely to express an interest in non-traditional hair colour.

H3b: Millennials are more likely to try non-traditional hair colour.

2. Methodology

Respondents

In order to determine online behaviour and attitude towards hair colour, a survey was conducted. Respondents were recruited using social networks (i.e. Facebook) and through e-mail and asked to complete a short online survey containing a series of questions about views towards brands, interest in hair colour, online behaviour and demographic information. The survey itself was conducted using Qualtrics, and was completed anonymously. This sample comprised people who were born between 1961 and 1998. The participants' ages were between 18 and 55. A total of 260 participants (65,77% female, and 34,23% male, $M_{age} =$ 27,58, SD = 7.58) completed the web-based survey.

Measures

The survey consists of 16 items concerning respondents' behaviour, 16 items concerning their online habits, 20 items regarding their time spent online, 11 items concerning their future, 5 items regarding their relationship with brands, 22 items regarding the reason why people colour their hair; 17 items concerning the motivations to choose non-traditional hair colour; 6 items regarding the reasons that discourage from using non-traditional hair colour and finally 7 items regarding the reasons why people stop colouring their hair.

Besides these key variables, a brief demographic section requested respondents to report their gender, age, highest degree or level of education. The items of all the variables of this study were based on past literature or on internal documents from a global, leading company in the beauty (including hair colour) segment. However, some modifications were made to best suit this study.

Online behaviour was measured on a seven-point Likert scale adapted from Bolton *et al.,* (2012), in which the authors explore the different types of online behaviours and personalities of millennials. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent the items described them.

This scale ranged from “Not at all descriptive of me” (1) to “Completely descriptive of me” (7). In the second part of the first block, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with statements about their behaviour in relation to brands and on their specific habits. The items ranged from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (7). Finally, regarding the reasons why Millennials start considering using non-traditional hair-colour, items also developed from internal documents, were adapted and modified to measure the reasons that pushed them to try using it. The items ranged from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (7). Finally, I analysed also the reasons why people stopped using, or considered using hair colour, using the scale developed by Kelsey Moran (2015) and from internal documents. Each item described a circumstance and items ranged from “Very unlikely” (1) to “Very likely” (7).

Before addressing the generational differences, every one of the 9 measures (Respondents’ behaviour, Online habits, Time spent online, Future motivations, Equal relationship with brands, Reasons why people colour their hair, Non-traditional hair colour motivations, Reason(s) that discourages from using non-traditional hair colour, Reasons why people stop colouring their hair) was tested for reliability.

The Cronbach’s alpha of each measure shows satisfactory levels of internal consistency as Table 1 shows. Also, Table 1 summarizes the variables’ measurement and their sources.

Table 1 summarizes the variables’ measurement and their sources.

Table 1 – Measurements, sources and Cronbach’s alpha

Variables	Measurements	Sources	Cronbach’s Alpha
Respondents’ behaviour	I like to stand out in a crowd. To me, being beautiful means to affirm my personality, my Being different; It’s important to be attractive to the opposite sex; I tend to buy the same beauty products; People’s opinion on my appearance is very important to me; I like taking risks; I have a keen sense of adventure; I like to pursue a life of challenge, novelty, and change; Celebrities influence my purchase decisions; I am interested in the arts; I am usually the first among my friends to know what’s going on Internet; I prefer to talk to people in person; I use text messages; I usually talk in social networks; I’m not able to	Personal elaboration adapted from Jeff Fromm and Christie Garton and from internal documents	0,723

	function without my mobile phone; Consumption and spending money are important to me.		
Online habits	I use the Internet everyday; For me, Offline and Online worlds are intertwined; I like to spend 15 or more hours a day consuming media; Free streaming videos are my #1 viewing source; I use subscription video on demand (Hulu, Netflix, Amazon Instant Video etc.); I watch pay TV; I usually go online via connected devices while watching TV; Most of my media viewing is dedicated to traditional TV series; Most of my media viewing time is dedicated to YouTube/Classes/Gameplay; Most of my media viewing time is dedicated to movies and sports; I usually watch at least one online video per day; I prefer videos < 5 minutes long; I prefer videos longer than 10 minutes; I'm fully or mainly focused on the video when I'm watching it online; I'm actively engaged on all main social media; I'm following several Bloggers & Influencers on different social media.	Personal elaboration adapted from Bolton *et al.* and from internal documents	0,791
Time Spent online	Search Engines/Portals & Communities; Telecom/Internet Services; Entertainment; Computers & Consumer Electronics; Multi-category Commerce; News & Information; Family & Lifestyles; Arts & Entertainment; Games; Sports; Beauty & Fitness; Computers & Electronics; People & Society; Other; I usually buy products online; Online how-to video about your colour; Online how-to video about your hair type; Online how-to video about your product; Online live video chat with a colour expert; Online long form article.	Personal elaboration adapted from Jeff Fromm and Christie Garton and from internal document	0,881
Future Motivations	Being beautiful helps me to have more self confidence; Being beautiful helps me to feel good in my life; To have a successful life; I've got to be able to stand on my own, rather than to have diplomas; I want to start my own business someday; I want to be financially independent; I want to be the one who takes decisions; Immagination & creativity are important to me; I look forward to meeting new people; I'm ready to take risks; I'm eager to discover the world; I always look for novelty.	Personal elaboration adapted from Jeff Fromm and Christie Garton, Velentine, & Powers and from internal documents	0,742
Equal relationship with brands	I believe I have the capacity to help a brand succeed or fail; I see my relationship with brands as a relationship among equals; I have little loyalty to brands, according to the trends of the moment; Brand recommendation based on past purchases is important to me; I'm ready to pay more when it is worth it.	Personal elaboration adapted from Jeff Fromm and Christie Garton and from internal documents	0,671
Reasons why people colour their hair	I want a change ; I want to obtain vibrant colour ; I want to cover grey; I want to enhance natural colour; I want to add shine to my hair;	Personal elaboration adopted from internal documents	0,697

	I have never colored my hair; I want to stand out from the crowd; I want to show my creative/fun personality; I do not like the natural colour of my hair; I want to show my rebel personality; It was an impulse; Others; I'm updated on the latest trends; I mainly buy colour in Drugstores; I see Hair Color as a way to express myself; I'm willing to change frequently hair colour.		
Non-traditional haircolor motivations	It matches my personality, It looks cool, I Desire to change, Love of colours, Party, Experiment, Looks Better, Be beautiful, Fashion, Fun, Be different Britghtness, Social influencers ((e.g. famous Instagramers, YouTubers or bloggers…), People I know or see on the street, Celebrities (e.g. actors / actresses, singers, models, etc.), Models, Custom advice for your hair type, Which product to buy, Which shade to choose, Which steps to follow to achieve your look, Product comparisons; How to apply the product.	Personal elaboration adopted from Moran (2015), and from Joeri Van Den Bergh & Mattias Behrer (2016) and from internal documents	0,626
Reason(s) that discourages from using non-traditional hair colours	I fear it damages my hair; I fear it doesn't match my personality; I fear it doesn't match my type of hair/face; I fear the reactions of my colleagues/boss; I fear the reactions of my friends/family; Others.	Personal elaboration adopted from Moran (2015), and from internal documents	0,925
Reasons why people stop coloring their hair	I don't like having to colour ; Started liking my natural colour; It is too expensive/not good value for money; I decided/accepted to go to grey; I don't like having to colour regularly; Other; I don't like my hair condition afterwards.	Personal elaboration adopted from internal documents	0,758

3. Results

Preliminary analysis

Table 2 offers a summary of respondents in function of age and gender and it shows that the proportion of women is nearly as predominant in both generational subgroups. Table 3 presents the educational levels in the test group

Table 2- The test group categorized by gender and age

Generational Cohort			
Gender	**Generation Y**	**Generation X**	**Total**
Male	64 (24.62%)	25 (9.62%)	89 (34.23%)
Female	127 (48.85%)	44 (16.92%)	171 (65.77%)
Total	191 (73.46%)	66 (25.38%)	260 (100%)

Table 3- The test group categorized by highest educational level

Generational Cohort			
Education	**Generation Y**	**Generation X**	**Total**
High School	14 (5.38%)	15 (5.77%)	29 (11.15%)
Under-graduate	50 (19.23%)	26 (10%)	76 (29.23%)
Post-graduate	127 (48.85%)	28 (10.76%)	155 (59.62%)
Total	191 (73.46%)	69 (26.54%)	260 (100%)

A comparison across generations: Generation X and Generation Y

The data from the questionnaire indicate the extent to which Gen X and Gen Y can be considered significantly different in their motivation to interact with brands through social media, and their motivation to consider non-traditional hair colour. Table 4 reports all mean scores, independent-samples t-test results and reliability test results. More positive scores represent more positive or agreeable answers, whereas more negative scores represent more negative or disagreeable answers.

Table 4- Means, reliability and independent-samples t-test results

Variable	Gen X	Gen Y	P-value	Cronbach's Alpha
• Respondents' behaviour	3.651	4.723	<0.05	0.723
• Online habits	3.392	4.691	<0.05	0.791
• Time spent online	3.323	4.772	<0.05	0.881
• Future motivations	3.354	4.524	<0.05	0.742
• Equal relationship with brands	2.449	5.466	<0.05	0.671
• Reasons why people colour their hair	3.843	4.632	<0.05	0.697
• Non-traditional hair colour motivations	3.867	4.714	<0.05	0.626
• Reason(s) that discourages from using non-traditional hair colours	2.132	4.976	<0.05	0.925
• Reasons why people stop colouring their hair	3.652	4.776	<0.05	0.758

Based on the Fromm & Garton scales of Millennials' Behaviour, the findings suggest that members of Gen Y spend more time using online content and they prefer to pursue a life of challenge, novelty and change compared with members of Gen X (*M*'s =4.723 and 3.651 respectively; $p < 0.05$). For instance, millennials are also more likely to take risks, to be influenced by celebrities, to use text messages and to often talk in social networks than their older counterpart.

For what concerns the level of brand engagement, Millennials, in their future, are more ready than Gen X to look for novelty, to discover the world, to take risks and to be beautiful in order to be more self confident (*M*'s =4.524 and 3.354 respectively; $p < 0.05$). Moreover, concerning their relationship with brands, Millenials are more likely than the older generation to see their relationship with brands as a relationship with equals (*M*'s =5.466 and 2.449 respectively; $p <0 .05$). Thus, H1 was supported.

On the other hand, regarding the scales developed by Bolton *et. al* (2012), Millennials, compared with Gen X members are more likely to be driven by their online habits (opportunity seeking motivation) (*M*'s =4.691 and 3.392 respectively; $p < .05$). This means that Millennials are more willing to get information about new products by, for instance, following a brand on social media.

Investigation, conversation and entertainment motivations, also by considering the time spent online, are higher in Gen Y than Gen X (*M*'s =4.772 and 3.323 respectively; $p < 0.05$). As a matter of fact, it is interesting to consider that most Millennial respondents preferred to look for information in Portals & Communities before making online purchases, as much as they preferred to look for information by reading online articles, or by watching online how-to videos about a product. Thus, H2 is supported.

In addition, also H3a is supported. In fact, the new generation is much more interested than the older one, to express an interest in non-traditional hair colour (*M*'s =4.714 and 3.867 respectively; $p < 0.05$).

In particular, following the scale developed from internal document, they like this "crazy" hair colour because it matches their personality, they love colours and they like to be different. On the other hand, for what concerns the reasons that discourage from using non-traditional hair colour, there was also enough statistical evidence to sustain the hypothesis that Gen Y and Gen X have different reasons for not using this kind of products (*M*'s =4.632 and 3.843 respectively; $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, making reference to the scales regarding the reasons why people stop colouring their hair, it was found that, Gen Y seems to be more motivated than Gen X to interrupt their use (*M*'s =4.776 and 3.652 respectively; $p < 0.05$). This is likely because younger people are more likely to stop colouring their hair beucase they don't like to colour their hair regularly, since they like to change looks often, or because they are afraid to "destroy" their hair, or simply because they don't like to go to the hairdresser often, or for economic reasons.

Finally, also H3b is supported. This is proved by the fact that Millennials are more likely to have tried non-traditional hair colour than the older cohort (*M*'s =4.976 and 2.132 respectively; $p <0 .05$). In fact, reasons like the love for colours, parties and being different are the main boost that encouraged the youth to use this particular hair colour.

In addition, it was decided to carry on one way Anova tests to enable a comparison among two different generational groups in order to find out if either the two averages are statistically different or not. Since the p-value is smaller than alpha for all the variables considered ($p < 0.05$), we have reasons to reject the null hypothesis given a 95% confidence level. The results suggest that individuals belonging to the two different age groups can be considered significantly different in any variable.

However, it is important to keep in mind the meaning of other two measures often used in statistics, which are R and R-squared. The first value considers the robustness of the linear relationship existing between two variables. Whether its value is closest to +1 higher is the perfect positive relationship among the considered variables. All the considered variables analysed in the sample have R values around 0,7 (the lowest is 0,519 for Reasons why people stop coloring their hair and the highest is 0,826 for Reasons that discourages from using non-traditional hair color). It means that a strong uphill linear relationship exists. The second one is the R-squared which calculates how close the information is to the fitted regression line. It varies between 0 and 1 – 0 means that the model does not explain the variability of the data, while 1 indicates that the model is good. In the considered sample, the lowest value is 0,395 for Reasons why people color their hair while the greatest one is 0,683 for Reasons that discourages from using non-traditional hair color (Refer to Appendix 4).

4. Discussion

The aim of this research was to show that Gen Y, compared with Gen X, spend more time surfing the net, looking for entertainment content, comparing different products and talking with their peers on social media. Moreover, Millennials are more inclined to buy non-traditional colour because they are not afraid of public opinion, and because they want to show their creative personality.

The present study's results support the general hypothesis that states that different generational cohorts differ on their behaviours and motivational drives; which theory was also backed up by past literature and, therefore, the formulated hypothesis. According to expectations based on past literature, Millennial cohort members consume more content on social media brands' pages than Gen X. Also, Gen Y is actively engaged on all main social media, and they prefer to look online for Search Engines/Portals & Communities and entertainment, which is consistent with Den Bergh & Behrer findings (2016). Also, Fromm & Garton (2013) suggest Millennials pay a lot of attention to follow just brands that they aspire to purchase in the time to come, and attribute significant influence to what they learn through social media, YouTube, blogs, etc. which can justify this difference. Certainty, the main trait of this generation, unlike their predecessors, is their addiction to tech-devices & social media from a very young age. This is proved by the fact that the preferred method of communication amongst Millennial peers is an electronic device, they use text messages and most of them talk on social networks. Moreover, the age at which they become owners of their own device keeps on reducing, being as young as 13 years old (Wesner & Miller, 2008). The older they get, the more significant is their mobile share of media. As reports show, most Millenials have confessed not to be able to function without their mobile phone. Additionally, Millennials and their older cohort spend approximately the same amount of time online, but Millennials are more likely to use the internet as a platform to broadcast their thoughts and experiences and to contribute user-generated content.

Smith & Mangold (2012), in their studies, showed that Millennials, more than any other generation, consider their relationship with a brand as a relationship among equals. This is because they believe to have the ability to help the growth of a brand (Toral *et al.,* 2009). In fact, with their past experiences in their current purchase choices and considering that they are ready to pay more when it is worth it, Gen Y can help a brand to succeed. As a consequence, Millennials are far more engaged in activities such as rating products and services.

Millennials want to renew their experiences rather than to own products. In fact, they need a high level of meaningful stimulation and excitement (Lee & Rabjohn, 2006). For this reason, fashion has integrated this behaviour in their business model with the development of an accessible ephemeral collection (e.g. H&M, Primark). In addition, Millennials, much more than Gen X, are not attached to products**, s**ince they have little loyalty to brands, according to the trends of the moment.

Also, opportunity seeking motivation is stronger in Millennials, which means that they are more likely to follow brands on social media, as they are always looking for novelty. This way they can be informed of new trends and promotions and get information about new offerings. Above all, by following several Bloggers & Influencers on different social media and by being actively engaged on that, they are more motivated to interact with brands. Moreover, when it comes to purchasing decisions, Millennials are far more likely to favour brands that have Facebook pages and mobile websites.

Finally, for what concerns the drivers for non-traditional hair colour, the difference among the two generational cohorts can be very significant. Young women in particular are getting in on this trend and it is leading to other forms of expression and experimentation. According to Hickman (2016), this includes spot treatments and adding colour to hair extensions. At the same time, in contrast to expectations based on past studies, Gen Y and Gen X cannot be considered significantly different based on the fact that most of the respondents are reluctant because of mis-education: they think that non-traditional hair colour will damage their hair or that it doesn't match their type of hair/face.

5. Managerial implications

In this study, several drivers that motivate Millenials to interact with brands on social media, and to colour their hair, were introduced and analysed. The drivers can be considered significantly different amongst the two generational cohorts: especially for "equal relationship with brand" and for "Reasons that discourages from using non-traditional hair colours". This might imply that, when targeting millennials, marketers should post content slightly different than when targeting Gen X. In fact, for the new generation, consumption and spending money are central drivers from a very young age and they are not ashamed of it.

In addition, the driver "Respondents Behaviour" can also be considered significantly different amongst the two generational cohorts. Millennials are definitely more creative & open than older generations. They are imaginative and creative because dreams and fantasies are important motivators in their lives; they are open to others because they look forward to meeting new people, they are ready to take risks because they like to do things that are actually risky and finally eager to discover the world because they are led by curiosity.

Also, the consumer behaviours of Millennials are both active and passive. We can consider them passive because they receive information from many channels (Hawley, 2011). In fact, social media is a never-ending source of "up to date" inspiration - through word of mouth from their community and friends via favourite social networks (Facebook, Twitter & Pinterest).

On the other hand, their "active behaviour" is demonstrated by the fact that most millennials research products using their mobile phone, to compare prices, to look up product information while in-store, to read ratings and reviews, and to check in-store and online availability of products. This is proved also by the fact that Millennials purchase more online products than Gen X. In this specific case, Millennials showed a high interest for the new emerging hair colour trend. In fact, Hair Care & Styling are useful tools to create a unique look and identity. They can be considered and used as their way to express themselves.

There surely is a high engagement in these fields, because an increasing diversity of hairstyles is now acceptable, and it's possible to have transformational looks in the short term. Moreover, it's a more and more important segment on the market. Given that, in 2015, temporary colour products gave a boost to hair colour launches, value for money and hair damage at the top of consumers' minds.[1]. This is proved, by the fact that temporary colours doubled over 2014-2015 (from 2014 £4.1m to £7.9m in 2015 in U.K. [2]). Furthermore, temporary colours represent 73% of search Volume on Semi-Permanent hair colour[3].

For this reason, brands need to consider that Millenials choose hair colour for different reasons than Gen X'ers. Hair colour should be considered a self-expression tool that allows the Millennial user to stay original and creative in his or her fashion choice. In addition, a high level of stimulation is requested to catch their attention. This can be done, by favouring simple

[1] Mintel
[2] UK, retail value sales and growth of haircolorant 2014-2015
[3] Google US Internal Source

messages that they like: images & videos with few words and by being impactful. It's also possible to satisfy the needs of Gen Y with fun, for example by surprising or provocative points of view and by renewing the content 24/7: yet following a meaningful editorial line.

To summarize, customers need to have the illusion of being autonomous, by doing research on social media and by expressing their opinion, and in control when it comes to choosing the products to define their own image. Non-traditional hair colour needs to help the individual improve their image and express their creativity. As a consequence it's definitely possible to consider it as a new trend. That is why it's important to give multiple options when it comes to colour and price range.

Finally, in order to engage young people it's important to consider that beauty is global (Eastman & Liu, 2012). In fact, with the digital advancements, the world has become the youngsters' playground and shopping mall: what was far away for Gen X has become accessible and very attractive for Millennials. As a consequence, a niche, like the non-traditional hair colour segment, could become a trendsetter.

For all these reasons, it's possible to conclude that the segment of non-traditional hair colour is really attractive for companies. They could in fact invest in this upcoming trend, targeting Millennials, by launching different kinds of hair colours, for instance: a spray colour that disappears in one wash, a simple lightening for every look or a permanent hair colour that can last more weeks. In Italy, for example, just by using the popularity of famous bloggers that are already using this hair colour, like Greta Menchi (1.6m followers on Instagram), Ramalila (646k followers on Instagram) or VIPs like Nina Zilli (180k followers on Instagram) and Elodie (616k followers on Instagram), they could take advantage of this emerging phenomenon.

We could speculate a launch strategy composed like this: first, the launch of different formats like a spray or like a permanent colour. Second, placing them in places where Millennials frequently hang out like drugstores, perfumeries and makeup stores. Third, it would be important to offer Millennials online discounts, for example on Amazon, considering the huge amount of time that they usually spend doing research on the web. Finally, a good on/off-line mix would be a good strategy. However, through an "army" of influencers, and by organizing online live events sponsorship, it would be possible to invest on a 100% digital media investments targeting Millennials.

6. Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it focuses only on comparing Gen Y / Millennials with Gen X. Another up-and-coming generational cohort to look out for is Gen Z, who are even more immersed in the technological world than Millennials. Although the group is currently too young to have significant spending power, this is a group that will come of age in the near future. It has been shown that their values are, again, different from those of Millennials, and this might consequently affect their attitudes towards fashion (including hair colour). Therefore, future studies could be conducted between other generational groups to compare their responses to those of Millennials and Gen X. Furthermore, using the current study as a starting point, as technology progresses future studies could analyse changing relationships with social media.

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